

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

nation's point of view. Had not the government given them free land and exemption from years of taxation? It was asking too much to require state-furnished labour as well.

The colonists⁵ chief grievance was that the state did nothing to assure them a labour supply, nor to protect them from the malefactions of employees. The crowning blow came in 1896, when French justice was largely substituted for Annamite in Tonkin. Corporal punishments were suppressed, and prison penalties commuted to days of forced labour. The lack of a native *etat civil* made it impossible to trace a delinquent employee who had taken flight. All natives looked to Europeans, and a traffic in false names and identity cards flourished. Natives found, so colonists claimed, that the new code was much less severe than the old, so that they felt less than even their ordinary scruples about breaking a contract, when the spirit moved to leave—which was often. Legal prosecution involved many and the expenditure of time and money, for the plantations far from the courts. Wails of anger from the colonists found no redress in the *desiderata* of the Chambers of Agriculture. At the end of the period it was generally conceded that *metayage* had been a failure in aiding the pacification of the country, but that it was a failure. The natives have never recovered from the usurpation of their land, and on those vast areas was no opportunity for amelioration through close contact with employer.

The French prestige makes it almost impossible for the state to prosecute colonists. Their constant interference in the life of the planters far too powerful in administrative matters to protect any malefactor they wanted. The state wished to avoid internecine warfare between itself and the natives. The govern-

